

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

Jerusalem, to join him in Rome. Petrarca promised that he would come, and actually started in the spring of 1370, but was taken ill at Ferrara, and, when he recovered, the doctors forbade him to proceed.¹ He was probably at Padua, or in his retreat at Arquà among the Euganean Hills, when he heard that all was over, and that Urban was returning to Provence. In his last letter to the Pope, one of the noblest of his compositions, Italy herself addresses the fugitive successor of Peter :—

" When I was lacerated with deadly sores, thou didst descend to me to cure my wounds, and didst say with Peter : *I am an apostle of Christ; have no fear of me, my daughter*. Thou didst begin to pour into them wine and oil, and now, without having bound them up or applied the remedies, thou art departing from me. Thou didst find, it may be, that my malady was such as seemeth to thee incurable, and for this thou art, perchance, deserting me, like a despairing physician who is ashamed to await the death of his patient. But who knoweth that He would not lay His hand upon me with thee, who healed the sick from all diseases ? Who knoweth if he would not be with thee, at whose word the limbs of the infirm were made whole ? Thou art the vicar of the one, the successor of the other ; thou holdest the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. . . . If thou wilt not be moved by my entreaty, He will meet thee on thy way, who to Peter's words when he fled : *Lord, whither goest Thou ?* answered : *I go to Rome to be crucified again.*"²

This letter was apparently written in the late spring or early summer of 1370. On May 22, an embassy from the Romans came to Montefiascone, to implore the Pope to reconsider his decision. ^u The Holy Spirit led me to Rome," he answered ; [<] it

¹ *Rerum Senilium*, Lib. XI. ep. I, 16, 17, letters dated Padua, July 25 (1368), December 24 (1369), May 8 (1370), respectively.

^a The original text of this letter (which is not found in the early editions of Petrarca's works) is given by A. M. Bandini, *Bibliotheca Leopoldina Laurentiana*, Tom. ii. (Florence, 1792), coll. 101-103. In Fracassetti's Italian version, it appears as the third of the *Lettere varie*. The words, *Ego sum Apostolus Christi*, etc., are those uttered by St. Peter to St. Agatha in prison, according to the legend of the latter saint, in the *Breviarium Romanum* for February 5.